

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for treating or preventing congestive heart failure in a mammal, said method comprising administering a polypeptide comprising an epidermal growth factor-like (EGF-like) domain to said mammal, wherein said EGF-like domain is encoded by a neuregulin NRG-2 gene, wherein said polypeptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 11 and said administering is in an amount effective to treat or prevent heart failure in said mammal.

2. (canceled).

3. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein said mammal is a human.

4. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein said congestive heart failure results from hypertension; ischemic heart disease; exposure to a cardiotoxic compound; myocarditis; thyroid disease; viral infection; gingivitis; drug abuse; alcohol abuse; pericarditis; atherosclerosis; vascular disease; hypertrophic cardiomyopathy; acute myocardial infarction; left ventricular systolic dysfunction; coronary bypass surgery; starvation; an eating disorder; or a genetic defect.

5. (original) The method of claim 4, wherein said mammal has undergone a myocardial infarction.

6. (withdrawn) The method of claim 4, wherein said cardiotoxic compound is an anthracycline; alcohol; or cocaine.

7. (withdrawn) The method of claim 6, wherein said anthracycline is doxorubicin, or daunomycin.

8. (withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein an anti-ErbB2 or anti-HER2 antibody is administered to said mammal before, during, or after anthracycline administration.

9. (withdrawn) The method of claim 4, wherein said cardiotoxic compound is an anti-ErbB2 or anti-HER2 antibody.

10. (withdrawn) The method of claim 4, wherein said polypeptide is administered prior to, during, or after exposure to said cardiotoxic compound.

11. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide is administered prior to or after the diagnosis of congestive heart failure in said mammal.

12. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide is administered to a mammal that has undergone compensatory cardiac hypertrophy.

13. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein administration of said polypeptide maintains left ventricular hypertrophy.

14. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein said method prevents progression of myocardial thinning.

15. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein administration of said polypeptide inhibits cardiomyocyte apoptosis.

16. (canceled).

17. (new) A method for treating congestive heart failure in a mammal, said method comprising:

administering a polypeptide comprising an epidermal growth factor-like (EGF-like) domain to said mammal, wherein said epidermal growth factor-like (EGF-like) domain consists essentially of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 11 and said administering is in an amount effective to treat heart failure in said mammal.

18. (new) A method for treating congestive heart failure in a mammal, said method comprising:

administering a polypeptide comprising an epidermal growth factor-like (EGF-like) domain to said mammal, wherein said epidermal growth factor-like (EGF-like) domain comprises an EGF-like domain of SEQ ID NO: 11 and said administering is in an amount effective to treat heart failure in said mammal.